

# Begum Zia laid to rest; Jaishankar hands over Modi's letter to Tarique Rahman

New Delhi/Dhaka (UNI)

Begum Khaleida Zia, Bangladesh's former premier and leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), was laid to rest beside her husband, late Gen Ziaur Rahman, who had assumed control of the nation a year after a coup which killed Sheikh Mujib, at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar on Wednesday afternoon.

Begum Zia was formally buried around 4.30 pm with full state honours, following her funeral held at the South Plaza of the national parliament building.

A large number of foreign dignitaries, including India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, attended the ceremony alongside family members, senior state officials, government representatives, diplomats, and BNP leaders.

Earlier in the day, Jaishankar met Tarique Rahman, the son of Begum Khaleida Zia, and personally handed over a condolence letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, conveying India's sympathies to the grieving family.



Sources said that the two exchanged pleasantries, though Jaishankar was also "briefed about fast moving political events in Dhaka" by both the Indian High commission and top BNP and other political leaders.

Jaishankar's trip for an out of power politician is being seen as an unusual and friendly diplomatic gesture from India by Bangladeshis.

Tarique is expected to take over the mantle of his mother and lead BNP in the forthcoming polls for the national parliament in February.

"We believe the sympathy wave generat-

ed by his mother's death could well lead him and his party to victory in the forthcoming elections," said Nizam, former editor of Bangladesh Pratidin.

Analysts believe that in an election from which BNP's main rival, the Awami League, has been banned, and where the Yunus government stand discredited for allowing chaos to rule on Dhaka's streets, BNP may have its best shot ever at an electoral victory.

Access to the burial site where Begum Zia was finally laid to rest, was strictly restricted, while public movement in Zia Udyan and surrounding areas of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar was limited till the burial was completed.

Earlier, hundreds of thousands of mourners gathered at Manik Mia Avenue to offer prayers at her 'namaz-e-janaza', bidding her a final farewell.

"It's an emotional moment for us ... she was the first woman from Bangladesh who was elected prime minister, that's an inspiration for us," said Sharmin Parveen, 32, over the phone to UNI.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, advisers of the interim government, BNP leaders, representatives of other political parties, and the chiefs of the three armed services joined the service.

The three-time former prime minister and long-serving chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party had passed away at around 6 am on Tuesday at Evercare Hospital after a prolonged, age-related illness.

Large crowds could be seen lining the route of the cortege as it passed solemnly through the streets. People had started assembling around 7 am, with leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) streaming in from city as well as from districts including Feni, Brahmanbaria, Mymensingh, Comilla, Gazipur, Munshiganj and Narayanganj, where the party is strong.

Supporters, party workers and well-wishers gathered in solemn silence to pay their final respects to a leader who was part and parcel of Bangladesh's politics for more than three decades.



## Palestinian killed by Israeli troops in West Bank

Jerusalem/Ramallah (UNI)

A Palestinian man was shot dead in his car by Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, the Israeli military and Palestinian sources said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that three people were critically wounded after Israeli forces opened fire on a vehicle near the village of Einabus in the northern West Bank. Footage circulating on social media showed the vehicle engulfed in flames.

Palestine's General Authority for Civil Affairs identified the victim as 20-year-old Qais Sami Jasser Allan.

Palestinian news agency Wafa, citing eyewitnesses, reported that a group of Israeli soldiers stormed the village, opening fire on the house of a Palestinian family and a vehicle on the village road.

## MUSTREAD

### Burkina Faso imposes reciprocal visa ban on U.S. nationals

Ouagadougou: Burkina Faso has decided to impose total visa restrictions on U.S. nationals in response to Washington's move to tighten entry rules for Burkinabe citizens, the government said Tuesday.

The decision was taken in line with the principle of reciprocity, according to a statement signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation, and Burkinabe Abroad of Burkina Faso, Karamoko Jean Marie Traore. The United States announced on December 16 that it would fully suspend the entry of Burkina Faso nationals starting January 1, 2026. The statement reaffirmed Burkina Faso's commitment to mutual respect, sovereign equality of states, and reciprocity in international relations.

### PM Albanese praises Australian spirit in response to Bondi Beach attack

Canberra: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has praised Australians for their response to the Bondi Beach terror attack in his New Year's address. In the annual video message marking the end of 2025, Albanese said that the usual joy that Australians feel at the start of a New Year is "tempered by the sadness" of the fatal shooting of 15 people at a Jewish festival at Sydney's Bondi Beach earlier in December. The PM said that the nation's hearts ache for every life lost and every life changed forever by the terror attack, but that the response to the attack displayed the "best of the Australian spirit in all its courage and compassion."

### Train collision in Peru kills 1, injures 30

Lima: A head-on train crash on the rail line leading to Peru's famed archaeological site of Machu Picchu on Tuesday killed one person and injured at least 30 others, local authorities said. The crash occurred near Qoriwayrachina in the southern Cusco region, where two tourist trains collided, according to police. The victim was identified by local media as Roberto Cardenas, a railway engineer. Rail services on the line connecting Machu Picchu with the city of Cusco were suspended following the accident, authorities said. An evacuation train arrived later in the day, while the cause of the crash remains under investigation.

### 1 killed, 3 injured in Canada's Saskatchewan shooting: Media

Ottawa: One person was killed and three others were injured in a shooting early Tuesday at Big Island Lake Cree Nation in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, local media reported. According to the report, Saskatchewan police were informed of a shooting about 392 kilometers northwest of the city of Saskatoon. A dangerous persons alert has been issued for two suspects described as armed, and police have warned residents to seek immediate shelter, lock their doors, and avoid the area, said the report. Police are working to determine if the shooting was random or targeted, it said. As a precaution, seven health-care facilities in the area have been placed under lockdown, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe said on X.

## Search for missing MH370 plane resumes in Indian Ocean 12 years after it vanished with 239 people on board

Washington (UNI)

Almost 12 years after Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 vanished over the Indian Ocean with 239 people on board, the search for the Boeing 777's wreckage is set to resume in the Indian Ocean — supported by the latest advancements in deep-sea, self-guided drone technology.

British-American deep sea robotics company Ocean Infinity has undertaken the latest search, which was set to begin on Tuesday. It has not revealed the location of the new search, but it hopes to finally solve the tragic mystery by deploying a fleet of the world's most advanced underwater drones, CBS News re-



ported.

The drones, or autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), are capable of diving nearly 20,000 feet and running for up to 100 hours before they need to resurface. They're equipped with side-scan sonar to create detailed 3D images of the seafloor — and anything on it — as they cruise near the bottom, following the contour up and down mountains and into trenches hidden in the abyss.

The AUVs can also use ultrasound imaging to peer beneath seafloor sediment that's built up over the years, as well as magnetometers that could detect metals in the wreckage of the lost aircraft.

## 16 injured as bus crashes into building in Stockholm

Helsinki (UNI)

A total of 16 people were injured after a bus crashed into the facade of a building in Liljeholmen, a district in southern Stockholm, on Tuesday afternoon, local authorities said.

Region Stockholm said seven people were taken to hospital, including two who were seriously injured, while nine others sought care at a nearby urgent care clinic. One of the injured was airlifted to hospital by ambulance helicopter, according to the region.

Police said a total of 17 people were on board the bus at the time of the crash. No injuries were reported among people outside the bus, police added.

The accident was reported to police at 4:06 p.m. local time near a tram station. Emergency services,



including ambulances, rescue crew and several police units, were dispatched to the scene.

Police have launched a criminal investigation on suspicion of careless driving and causing bodily harm. The bus has been seized and will be removed for a technical examination, police said.

Authorities have also collected

## Bangladesh Awami League deplores upcoming polls as 'illegitimate'

Dhaka (UNI)

Decrying the upcoming national elections and July Charter referendum as "political suicide", the Bangladesh Awami League (AL), issuing a scathing criticism of the Chief Adviser (CA) Md Yunus led interim gov't for banning it, has deplored the upcoming polls as "illegitimate."

Deeming them neither free nor fair, the AL argued that even after its ban, it was still the country's largest and most popular party, claiming to have the support of more than 60% of the total voter base, thus automatically disenfranchising the majority of the nation's voters.

"This is not an election, it is an execution of democracy," the party wrote on its official website, adding



"No government that removes its main rival from the ballot can claim legitimacy."

The party, accusing the CA of

abusing the nation's political — legal institutions, said that through its suspension from the Election Commission's registrar, followed by the imposition of legal prohibitions, the Yunus administration, had "turned the state into a political weapon and the election into a controlled exercise with a pre-decided outcome."

It further noted, that despite existing rivalries and hostilities in the past elections, which were even subject to boycotts, no government had previously barred a major party from participation, which was true for the Awami League as well.

"Even in the most polarised moments of our politics, the right to compete was never abolished," the party commented.

## Ten countries voice concerns over Gaza humanitarian situation



London (UNI)

The foreign ministers of Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Britain on Tuesday issued a joint statement expressing concerns over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The ministers expressed "serious concerns about the renewed deterior-

ation of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which remains catastrophic," according to the statement released by the British Foreign Office.

Civilians in Gaza are facing appalling conditions with heavy rainfall and temperatures dropping as winter draws in, the statement said, adding that they are also suffering from severe shortages of food and health facilities.

The ministers called on the Israeli government to ensure the "sustained and predictable" operation of international non-governmental organizations in Gaza to secure a humanitarian response, and to ensure that the United Nations and its partners can continue delivering aid in the region.

## Abdullah bin Zayed receives phone call from US Secretary of State



Abu Dhabi (ANI/WAM)

H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, has received a phone call from Marco

Rubio, United States Secretary of State, during which they discussed the strong strategic relations between the two countries, as well as key regional developments.

During the call, H.H. Sheikh Abdullah and the US Secretary of State reviewed a number of issues of shared interest, including the situation in the Gaza Strip and the latest developments in Yemen.

The UAE's top diplomat underscored the country's unwavering commitment to working closely with the United States, as well as with all its partners, to establish sustainable peace in the region and to strengthen security and stability in the interests of its peoples.

The two sides also exchanged New Year greetings, with H.H. Sheikh Abdullah extending his best wishes to Secretary Rubio and his family for a happy New Year.

## Russia, China actively expanded trade cooperation in 2025

Beijing: Russia and China actively expanded trade and economic cooperation in 2025, while mutual visa-free travel facilitated people-to-people exchanges, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday.

"Russia and China actively expanded trade and economic cooperation, and major cooperation projects are steadily moving forward," Putin said in his New Year's message to Chinese President Xi Jinping, as quoted by China Central Television. The Russian leader emphasized that the introduction of mutual visa-free travel between the two countries significantly facilitated people-to-people exchanges. Putin reportedly added that relations between Russia and China maintained good momentum and achieved fruitful results.

In addition, he stated his readiness to maintain close contact with the Chinese leader on bilateral relations and major international issues.

## Xi, Putin exchange new year greetings



Beijing (UNI)

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday exchanged New Year greetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In his message, Xi extended his sincere congratulations and best wishes to Putin and the Russian people on behalf of the Chinese government and the Chinese people.

Noting that 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, Xi said China and Russia have solemnly commemorated the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's

War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War and the World Anti-Fascist War, sending a powerful message that peace will prevail, justice will prevail, and the people will prevail.

Xi said the year 2025 also marks a concrete step in the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, recalling that they met in Beijing and Moscow respectively this year, where they exchanged in-depth views on major issues of mutual concern.

He added that the reciprocal visa-free policies between the two countries have been implemented, construction of the energy corridor is progressing steadily, and cooperation in emerging sectors is flourishing. China and Russia have also supported each other within the United Nations and other multilateral frameworks, contributing their insights and efforts to improve global governance, Xi said.

## Thailand repatriates 18 detained Cambodian soldiers

Bangkok: Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a statement on Wednesday, saying that Thailand has repatriated 18 detained Cambodian soldiers to Cambodia.

In the statement, the MFA stated that the repatriation is in line with paragraph 11 of the Joint Statement between Thailand and Cambodia signed at the 3rd Special General Border Committee Meeting on Dec. 27, 2025, which states that the 18 Cambodian soldiers will be returned to Cambodia after the ceasefire has been fully maintained for 72 hours.

The release is also in the spirit of the Joint Declaration between Thailand and Cambodia signed on Oct. 26, 2025, in Kuala Lumpur.

## Turkish President Erdogan slams Israel's recognition of Somaliland as "illegitimate", warns of Horn of Africa instability

Ankara [Turkiye]

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has strongly criticised Israel's decision to recognise Somaliland as a sovereign state, calling the move "illegitimate and unacceptable" and warning that it could fuel instability across the Horn of Africa.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Ankara, Erdogan said Ankara viewed Somalia's territorial unity as non-negotiable and accused Israel of taking steps that could un-

dermine regional stability, Al Jazeera reported.

"Preserving the unity and integrity of Somalia in all circumstances holds special importance in our view. Israel's decision to recognise Somaliland is illegitimate and unacceptable," Erdogan said.

Erdogan further accused the Israeli government of pursuing destabilising policies beyond the Middle East. "The Netanyahu government has the blood of 71,000 of our Palestinian brothers and sisters on its hands. Now



it is trying to destabilise the Horn of Africa as well, after its attacks on Gaza, Lebanon,

Yemen, Iran, Qatar and Syria," he said, referring to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

During the meeting, Erdogan also said Turkiye and Somalia were expanding cooperation in the energy sector, citing encouraging signs from joint offshore exploration activities, according to Al Jazeera.

Israel last Friday became the first country to formally recognise Somaliland, saying the move was in the spirit of the Abraham Accords, which normalised ties between Israel and several Arab na-

tions.

Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991 following the collapse of Somalia's central government after a civil war. Despite operating with its own currency, passport and armed forces, it has not received international recognition.

Standing alongside Erdogan, Somali President Mohamud condemned Israel's move as "illegal aggression", saying it violated the United Nations Charter and African Union agreements.